

# Uniform Business Office Newsletter

*Helping frontline users perform their day-to-day jobs*

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

*Due to Privacy concerns, all personal identifiers, e.g., names and personal email addresses, were removed from this newsletter. We apologize for this inconvenience. If you have questions about an article, please contact the UBO Help Desk ([UBO.helpdesk@altarum.org](mailto:UBO.helpdesk@altarum.org)/703-575-5385).*

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## 1. Billing Offices Again Smash Third Party Collections Record in FY 2009

Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) collected a record \$241 million in third party collections (TPC) in fiscal year (FY) 2009. This is the third year in a row that collections have set a new record. Total collections increased by over 133% over the past three years.

The growth in collections is shared by all the Services—each Service exceeded its own TPCP prior-year collections for each of the past three years. Congratulations to the Service UBO Managers and all MTF UBO staff who worked so hard to make this happen.

## 2. 2010 UBO/UBU Annual Conference — It's Sooner Than You Think

Get ready for new and exciting educational sessions at the 2010 UBO/UBU Annual Conference, to be held Tuesday, 23 March through Thursday, 25 March at the National Conference Center (NCC) in Lansdowne, Virginia. Pre-conference sessions will be held Monday, 22 March.



As in previous years, the conference will feature seven tracks:

- Tracks 1 and 2 focus on coding and data quality
- Tracks 3 and 4 focus on billing and reimbursement
- Track 5 is dedicated to Medical Services Account (MSA) issues
- Track 6 features Third Party Outpatient Collection System (TPOCS) classes
- Track 7 features classes on Coding Compliance Editor (CCE)

To support this year's theme of "Turning Knowledge Into Action," TPOCS sessions will focus more heavily on hands on learning instead of lectures. The MSA track will again factor in time to allow one-on-one hands-on training for anyone needing it.

We will continue to offer core topics such as Billing the Coast Guard, HIPAA Issues, Program Integrity, UBO Help Desk, and UBO Billing Policies. There will also be new topics, such as "Electronic Collections, Deposits, and Payments" and "Deciphering TPOCS Error Rates."

## A GREEN Conference

A big change to this year's conference is that copies of presentations will *not* be made available at the conference. Instead, presentations will be posted on the TMA UBO Web site at least two weeks before the conference. Everyone is invited to download and print presentations of interest.

### Conference Registration Details

Conference registration will open mid-January through the TMA [UBO Web site](#). Remember that you must obtain a registration number from your Service to sign up for the conference, pre-conference MSA Sessions, and all TPOCS sessions. All conference attendees must also register with the NCC as either a Day Guest or Overnight Guest.

### 3. Outpatient MAC Rates Published – Effective 15 December 2009

Updated billing rates for outpatient Medical Affirmative Claims (MAC) became effective on publication in the 15 December 2009 issue of the *Federal Register*. The outpatient MAC rates are now the same as the rates that became effective for all other outpatient claims on 1 July 2009. All rates – including pharmacy rates, which are updated more frequently – are posted on the TMA [UBO Web site](#).

Medical Affirmative Claims are claims for medical treatment furnished by military treatment facilities (MTFs) to patients who are injured by a third party. The MAC reimbursement rate must be approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and then published in the *Federal Register*. Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 billing rates for *inpatient* MAC will be submitted for OMB approval soon. Until these are published in the *Federal Register*, MTFs must use FY 2009 inpatient rates to bill inpatient MAC.

### 4. ASAs Effective, but ICD-9s Delayed

The FY 2010 Adjusted Standardized Amounts (ASAs) for use with DRG weights to determine inpatient charges became effective on 1 October 2009 and are available via the TMA [UBO Web site](#). However, testing and system limitations have delayed loading the 2010 ICD-9 codes into the Composite Health Care System (CHCS) and Coding Compliance Editor (CCE) until late December. The ICD-9 codes determine the MS-DRGs, codes to classify and reimburse inpatient hospital stays, and bill the inpatient rates.

MTFs should hold inpatient billing until CHCS and CCE are updated. The UBO will alert the Services when the updates are completed.

### 5. CY 2010 OIB Update — In Search of Procedures/Services without Rates

TMA UBO will begin preparing for the Calendar Year 2010 Outpatient Itemized Billing rate update in January 2010. Send information about procedures or services that currently do not have rates, but should be included in the 2010 update to your Service UBO Manager, in time for them to send it to the [UBO Help Desk](#) by 31 January 2010.

### 6. Pharmacy Rate Update

The next pharmacy rate update, which includes prices for approximately 120,000 National Drug Codes, will be effective 3 January 2010. This update reflects a change in methodology that includes a \$2.00 per script dispensing fee, which is consistent with the average dispensing fee allowed by TRICARE retail pharmacy. In addition to the dispensing fee, the update also reflects a new pricing methodology that uses TRICARE allowable payment data from the MHS retail Pharmacy Data Transaction Service (PDTS). If a drug is represented in the Managed Care Pricing File (MCPF) but not in the PDTS retail database, the price will be based on the median average wholesale price. Using this approach, TMA UBO established a UBO pharmacy rate methodology that prices the vast majority of prescription pharmaceuticals in a manner comparable to what TRICARE will reimburse for similar pharmaceuticals. A fact sheet explaining the new rates was distributed to the Service UBO Managers. The Pharmacy Pricing Estimator (PPET) will also be updated.

In addition to providing pharmaceutical pricing comparable to TRICARE reimbursement, the updated table will provide a current list of NDCs to the MTF billing systems. The new methodology does not limit the availability of pharmaceuticals, it only identifies billable pharmaceuticals and the amount to bill.

## 7. Refining Cosmetic Surgery Estimates for Abdominoplasties

There have been inquiries recently regarding the physician selection of 15847 as the single code on the superbill to represent two separate procedures, a panniculectomy and umbilical transposition. The description on the superbill associated with 15847 is misleading and can be interpreted incorrectly to represent the only code for what are really two separate procedures. The code for removing excess fat and tissue below the waistline without moving the umbilicus is 15830. If the umbilicus is also being moved, then 15847 should be checked off on the superbill in addition to 15830 as a separate procedure code. In fact, 15847 is an associated procedure, known in coding terms as an add-on code. In the Cosmetic Surgery Estimator (CSE), 15847 is not on the drop down list in Field 1, but if you key in the code, the CSE will allow you to do this, resulting in an incorrect estimate. Alert your UBO Manager if you encounter a superbill in which only the 15847 is marked without the 15830.

This issue will be resolved in the next version of the Cosmetic Surgery Estimator, which will be released in the Summer of 2010. The Glossary and Superbill will also be revised to reflect the primary and secondary relationship between the two codes.

## 8. Preparing for CSE v6 – Feedback Needed

In our continuing quest for process improvement, we need input from the MTF billing community for suggested revisions to the Cosmetic Surgery Estimator. The due date for comments has been extended to 31 December 2009. Contact your Service UBO Manager with questions or concerns about the present estimator, Superbill, User Guide, etc.

## 9. Tips to Maintain Connectivity with DEERS

The Defense Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS) provides hourly Standard Insurance Table/Other Health Insurance (SIT/OHI) updates from the master table to all Composite Health Care System (CHCS) hosts, unless the connectivity has been severed. Connectivity is maintained by building a relationship with the CHCS administrator. Developing a mutual understanding of each other's role in this process will foster a better understanding of the importance of continuous connectivity with DEERS. Communication is the key to making this relationship a success. Visit the UBO SIT/OHI Web site for additional information. Contact [VPOChelpdesk@Altarm.org](mailto:VPOChelpdesk@Altarm.org) if you have any questions.

## 10. Remember to Safeguard Protected Health Information (PHI)

Billing office personnel are reminded to keep patient privacy at the forefront while managing outstanding accounts. While the patient's medical record may be relevant in a billing dispute and DoD networks are generally secure, do not electronically transmit protected health information (PHI) to an external unsecure network to manage a claim or to demonstrate a billing discrepancy. Do not attach medical or billing records with PHI to messages emailed to an external unsecure network. Do not use real patient data for teaching purposes. These are considered unauthorized disclosures. Additional resources are available from the [TMA Privacy Office](#). The Privacy Office also led a UBO HIPAA Refresher teleconference in December. Slides from the teleconference are available on the TMA [UBO Web site](#).

## 11. Exciting Changes to the UBO Learning Center

Have you visited the [Learning Center](#) page of the TMA [UBO Web site](#) lately? This is your one-stop site for all UBO-related educational resources.

## Teleconferences

New this year on the [Learning Center](#) page of the TMA [UBO Web site](#) is a list of upcoming teleconferences so that you can mark your calendars now. For example, January's teleconference will discuss the new Current Procedure Terminology and Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (CPT/HCPCS) codes. In February, there will be a teleconference discussing SIT/OHI. There will not be a teleconference in March since the Annual Conference will be held. April's teleconference will help participants learn all about the many other resources available through the TMA UBO Web site. In June, there will be two teleconferences – one focusing on cosmetic surgery billing and the other on outpatient itemized billing rates.

### 2009-2010 Teleconference Topics Planned

December	HIPAA Refresher
January	CPT/HCPCS
February	SIT/OHI
March	Annual Conference
April	UBO Web Site
June	Cosmetic Surgery Billing OIB rates

### December Teleconference: HIPAA Refresher

In December, TMA UBO hosted a special teleconference intended to be a HIPAA Refresher. This session was especially important as UBO Conference Speakers prepared their presentations. Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and Protected Health Information (PHI) cannot be included in any presentation material forwarded to the UBO Office. This teleconference stressed the proper steps to avoid accidental unauthorized disclosures of PHI. Special thanks to TMA's Privacy Office for preparing the PowerPoint slides and leading the session. Slides from the teleconference are available on the TMA [UBO Web site](#).

### Other Training Opportunities

The UBO Learning Center is not limited to teleconferences and PowerPoint presentations. MTF UBO staff members are encouraged to visit the web-based training site, which includes a very successful Patient Category (PATCAT) course. A certificate of completion signed by Ms Prater, TMA UBO Program Manager, is sent to all participants who successfully pass the test that follows the course.

In addition to the PATCAT course, there is a Web-based course focusing on the July update to the Cosmetic Surgery Estimator (CSE). A printed version of the course is available from [CSE Web event transcript](#).

### NEW Limitations to Teleconference Participation

Teleconferences are now limited to 50 call-in lines per presentation. Consider sharing a phone line if you work with others who are also calling in.

Based on our experience over the years, we believe this will be an adequate number of lines. If we find that the number is insufficient, we will make every effort to offer additional teleconferences. For example, the November teleconference titled, "2010 updates for ICD-9 and POA Requirements," was so successful with so many people trying to dial in, that we scheduled an additional call in early December. Also remember that the presentations are available from the UBO Learning Center page of the TMA Web site.





**Abbreviations/Acronyms in This Issue**

<b>ASA</b>	Adjusted Standardized Amounts
<b>CCE</b>	Coding Compliance Editor
<b>CHCS</b>	Composite Health Care System
<b>CPT</b>	Current Procedural Terminology
<b>CY</b>	Calendar year
<b>DLA</b>	Defense Logistics Agency
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year
<b>HCPCS</b>	Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System
<b>HIPAA</b>	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
<b>ICD</b>	International Classification of Diseases
<b>MCPF</b>	Managed Care Pricing File
<b>MSA</b>	Medical Services Account
<b>MTF</b>	Military Treatment Facility
<b>NCC</b>	National Conference Center (Lansdowne, Virginia)
<b>NDC</b>	National Drug Codes
<b>NLT</b>	no later than
<b>OHI</b>	Other Health Insurance
<b>OIB</b>	Outpatient Itemized billing
<b>PATCAT</b>	Patient Category
<b>PDTS</b>	Pharmacy Data Transaction Service
<b>PHI</b>	Protected Health Information
<b>PII</b>	Personally Identifiable Information
<b>PO</b>	Program Office
<b>POA</b>	Present on Admission
<b>POC</b>	Point of Contact
<b>SIT</b>	Standard Insurance Table
<b>TMA</b>	TRICARE Management Activity
<b>TPCP</b>	Third Party Collections Program
<b>TPOCS</b>	Third Party Outpatient Collection System
<b>UBO</b>	Uniform Business Office
<b>UBU</b>	Unified Biostatistical Utility



**UBO/UBU Annual Educational Conference**  
**22-25 March 2010**  
**Lansdowne, Virginia**